No 55 20 fes.

An

Essay

on the

Bilious Remitting Fever

as it appeared (in 18[illegible]).

in

Petersburg Virginia

"Truth requires no ornament;

"What she borrows from the pencil is deformity

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Introduction.

The subject which I have selected for an Essay to be submitted to your consideration, on becoming a candidate for medical honours, is an account of the Bilious Remitting fever, as it appeared in the Town of Petersburg and vicinity, Va. during the fall of 1813. Waving all theoretical discussion, and simply detailing facts, as they came under my own observation having seen a number labouring under the disease. But those whom I saw being slaves, and a few of the lower class of society, it is probable they were not generally as severely afflicted as those who partake freely of luxuries; but even among them it was often of a most distressing nature, and when I reflect upon the importance of the

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task in which I am about to engage I shrink with diffidence from it, and would most willingly engage in one less so, but what subject which has any alliance to the healing art that is not of the utmost importance to mankind? Were I to enter into a minute description of the disease, I should be necessarily compelled to relate several cases which would take up much of your time to no purpose; I shall therefore endeavour to make amends for the imperfection of this my first medical Essay, by consuming as little of your time as possible, and shall only give a general account of the symptoms and mode of treatment.

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Symptoms.

The symptoms of approaching indisposition were indolence, yawning, sighing, loss of appetite often an unquenchable thirst, with constipation of the bowels, in some instances altho' the apetite was good, the persons would complain of a want of taste in the articles they eat. Thus the symptoms would progress untill a cold chill came on accompanied with nausea, and sickness at stomach which would often terminate in a vomiting of bilious matter, and the patient feeling only debilitated, which he attributes to the great evacuation; resumes his former occupations with the hopes of returning health, but these hopes he finds abortive by the return of another paroxism which did not observe a regular period, but generally on the second day, it appeared with redoubled violence, being likewise ushered in with a chill and of longer duration than the first;

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The pulse became small irregular and in some cases scarcely perceptable; a sense of weight about the chest, respiration much impeded, great thirst, irritability of temper and often a discharge of bile downwards, which left the bowels in a constipated state. The remission of the chill was not uniform lasting sometimes not more than ten minutes, and at others thirty which was the longest I saw. The chill gradually abating a fever gradually advances the pulse now became fuller and stronger, a pain in the head, back and loins follows, the eyes become red and in some instances, though rarely inflamed the thirst increases, intense heat pervades the whole body, with injection of spirits; after some time these abate, the skin gradually & partially becomes moist, the pulse more regular the breathing less impeded the patient falls into a short but not refreshing slumber, from which he awakes much

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debilitated and remains languid little disposed to take any nourishment but complains of continual thirst bitterness in the mouth, with a clammy sensation, the tongue covered with a white crust generally, but in some few instances little deviation from natural appearance. Added to these they would complain of either a severe pain in the head, and back, or intolerable sickness at the stomach; those complaining of the one scarcely ever complaining of the other.

Thus the disease advanced which if not checked either put ~~an~~ an end to the unfortunate sufferer, or protracted those sufferings to a great length.

There are the principal symptoms which accompanied the disease: all of which as may be supposed did not occur in any one case, but the principal part were present in nearly all, unless when attacked in the forming state. Generally the remissions were distinctly marked but occasionally so indistinctly as to assume the continued form.

Treatment

If attacked in its forming state with a dose of Glauber salts and tartar emetic given in divided doses until it produced vomiting and cathartic the disease was often stopped; but if the disease had made any progress the exhibition of an emetic was attended with ill consequences the vomiting continuing for some time which cause the sores seem to be less distinctly marked: and so exhausted the patient as to threaten an unfavorable termination. But unfortunately the disease was not often thus early attacked the patient not being sensible of the premonitory symptoms, or not regarding them, as was when attacked in its forming state it would not always yield. In those cases which it had been attacked but did not yield it was only necessary to keep the bowels open and persevere in the use of tonics

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with proper attention to Diet and exercise. If it had not been noticed until the symptoms became more alarming, and inflammatory diath existed being present which was generally the case it was advisable to take X or XII ozs of blood; frequently not more than one bleeding was necessary, but occasionally two were requisite which was as often as the pulse would bear; the effects of bleeding were not always the same, it sometimes producing no evident good, and at others a good effect was evident, the patient falling into a gentle slumber soon after the operation. But towards the end of autumn the least quantity of blood could not be drawn with impunity, it prostrating the system to an alarming degree.

Purgatives were invaluable; in the commencement of the disease, the bowels being generally constipated a dose of Calomel & Jalap was

given, the milder not being sufficient to open the bowels nor indeed would a ~~one~~ moderate dose of Calomel & Jalap succeed, it required a large one aided by an enema. Such was the temporal effect of purgatives that then after their operation the patients countenance at once assumed a cheerful indication of an alleviation of pain and they would fall into a gentle slumber accompanied with a deep snoring. During the paroxysm great care was taken from placing each hand in a basin of cold water and bottles with ice to the head and feet being cautious not to allow them to remain a sufficient length of time to become unpleasantly cold. Great advantage was likewise obtained from the free use of ice, allowing the patient to eat it ad libitum, it not only allayed the heat of the fever but strengthened the stomach and in case of vomiting prep-

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The

- ared it for retaining tonics. Diaphoretics particularly in cases where the remissions were indistinctly marked were highly serviceable they had the effect of making them more distinctly, avoiding there exhibition in the inflammatory stage.

Blisters even at an early period were attended with advantage in those cases which I used them (which were but few) not having recourse to them until it was too late to give them a fair trial and from the benefit I derived from them in those few cases in which I applied them early I regret much not having recourse to them sooner than I did, ~~applying~~ Cupping when the pain in the head was severe was likewise used. As a substitute for the common Dilient drink I used molasses and water with a little acid which assisted in keeping the bowels open.

The system being prepared for tonics and

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Peruvian bark expensive I determined from the high recommendation of Dr. Barlow to try the Cornus Florida and I am happy in saying it met my most sanguine expectations indeed I am inclined to think if it were not so common throughout the U. States and therefore so easily obtained the dogwood would be preferred by many to the Peruvian bark be this as it may I believe I should not have obtained more benefit from its use than I did from the dogwood. An objection might be urged against it, that it required much larger doses than the P. Bark. this objection would be of considerable weight were we compelled to use it in substance, but by decoction we obtain an elegant and not a very nauseous preparation which is not so apt to be rejected by the stomach as the decoction of the P. Bark. I used it with as much caution

as I would have used the Bark not giving it during the fever the patient generally taking a wine glass full every X or XV minutes; in no case was there a relapse but this was guarded against by attention to Diet & Exercise &c. and continuing in the use of the decoction for several days during the convalescent state, during which time the bowels were kept open which was effected by occasionally giving a mild cathartic, but often the decoction had the effect of purging, and in one or two instances it purged so much that I thought proper to check it by occasional doses of Laudanum; during this stage great attention was paid to exercise, the patient never exposed himself after Sun down, but was allowed as much exercise as he could bear without fatigue, the apetite was not indulged, in things of an indigestable nature, but frequ-

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-ntly and sparingly satisfying it. under this treatment the recoveries were generally rapid, and in no case do I recollect of a person having a second attack.

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